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INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 8621  
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RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 6365  
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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT  
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#### In Today's Papers

##### The Turban Debate Continues

All papers report the chairman of the far right MHP, Devlet Bahceli, released a statement saying the turban controversy could be resolved by rewriting article 10 of the Constitution. However, Ergun Ozbudun, the architect of the new AKP-backed draft constitution, said one-sentence changes in the constitution cannot solve problems because similar reforms passed by the parliament were annulled by the Constitutional Court in 1989.

The Chief prosecutor of the Court of Appeals Abdurrahman Yalcinkaya objected to the government plan to lift the headscarf ban. Yalcinkaya stated that political parties cannot use religion or religious symbols for political gains. "The rights and freedoms mentioned in the constitution cannot be used to destroy the unity between the state and the nation, and to purge values of the secular democratic republic," noted Yalcinkaya. He underlined that freedom to wear certain clothing items in educational institutions might cause damage to Turkey's secular and unitary structure. The ruling AKP officials have criticized the chief prosecutor, saying his statement contradicts the principle of separation of powers.

Opposition CHP leader Deniz Baykal warned that lifting the turban ban in the constitution would spread other political symbols all over public institutions and possibly even in the military. "It will kick off a process, and no one can guess where it will stop," emphasized Baykal.

Islamist-oriented Zaman reports the Head of the Religious Affairs Directorate (Diyanet,) Professor Ali Bardakoglu, said the headscarf is a 'religious requirement' for women as is openly stated in Islam. "All must realize that over the past 14 centuries, women in the Muslim world have been covering their heads. The headscarf is a religious requirement, but whether or not people meet it is a matter

of their own free will," said Bardakoglu. He stressed that the matter can be resolved through dialogue among the political parties.

#### Editorial Commentary on Turban Debate

Ertugrul Ozkok commented in mainstream Hurriyet (1/18): "MHP leader Bahceli seeks a solution for the turban issue within the framework of the constitution. He believes that the turban can be allowed in universities by passing a minor amendment to the Constitution's Article 10. I strongly oppose this proposal. I believe that taking the turban issue under a Constitutional guarantee will lead to serious problems. In the past, I was never against women wearing turbans entering universities. But the latest developments forced me to change my mind. I am skeptical about the real goals of those who want to lift this ban. I believe that lifting the ban will lead to neighborhood pressure to wear the turban in Anatolian provinces. I can see this issue has become a mission for the Prime Minister and his circle. Obviously, winning 46.5 percent of the votes during the elections encouraged them. If they want, they can lift the turban ban within the democratic framework; and we have no right or power to object. From today until the day I die, I will say 'wearing the turban is a personal choice and it should not be a political or religious symbol.' Putting such a provision in the Constitution will undermine secularism."

Hrant Dink to be Commemorated on First Anniversary of His Death  
Hurriyet, Milliyet, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others report Turkish Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, shot dead last year, will be commemorated on the first anniversary of his death on Saturday. Papers echo suspicions persisting over a police cover up in his slaying. A report by Trabzon Gendarme Command officials say Dink's murder was plotted by Yasin Hayal, a key suspect who directed four people to trail Dink and carry out research before killing the journalist. The report was not put into the Dink murder file. Links were seen among the members of security forces in Trabzon,

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Istanbul, and Ankara, and the plotters. A lawyer for the Dink family told the Interior and Justice Ministries in a report, "As long as the public officials investigated for involvement in the murder retain their posts, the ambiguities surrounding the murder cannot be cleared."

A commentary in the leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet says, "Solving the Dink murder with all the forces in its background seems impossible. Solving this murder means cleaning up the gangs within the state. It means purging the 'inner state'. It means overcoming the obstacles to democracy."

#### Editorial Commentary on the Dink Murder and Article 301

Hasan Cemal wrote in mainstream Milliyet (1/18): "Both Article 301 and the turban issue are about democracy and freedom, but PM Erdogan doesn't seem to be willing to exert an equal amount of effort on both issues. For the last two years the AKP government has not done anything to address Article 301. As Cengiz Candar told an AKP Minister, 'no one is in prison because of Article 301, but people have died because of 301.' One year after the assassination of Hrant Dink, we are still in darkness. The murder case remains unsolved. Rakel Dink's screams during her husband's funeral still ring in our ears: 'We cannot do anything until we question the darkness that creates murderers out of babies.' Well, did we question the darkness? No. Did the court case give us any trust in the judiciary? No. Is the process of this trial trustworthy? No. The Dink family and their lawyers sent a thick file to the Prime Ministry containing a huge list of neglected issues. Looking at that list, unfortunately, one easily loses trust in the judiciary."

#### Survey: Anti-PKK Cooperation Lifts US Image in Turkey

Mass appeal Star daily and Today's Zaman English daily report independent research organization Pollmark conducted a survey in Turkey in December 2007, which shows that 57.8 percent of participants welcomed the US cooperation against the PKK, while 30.8 percent remained skeptical. In a survey held by the same company in October, 86.4 percent opposed the US and only 5.9 percent had a positive view of the US. The same research says the ruling AKP's

support has increased to 50.6 percent from the 46.5 percent of votes the party received in July 22 general elections; opposition CHP and MHP suffered slight falls with 19.2 and 14.3 respectively. The poll canvassed the views of 3,102 adults in one-on-one interviews in 12 provinces across Turkey in the last four days of December.

Baghdad Cuts Ties with Foreign Oil Firms Working with KRG  
Zaman, Yeni Safak, Taraf, Cumhuriyet and Aksam report the Iraqi Oil Ministry has decided to cancel oil deals signed between foreign oil companies and the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in northern Iraq. An Iraqi official said if foreign oil companies insist on retaining the deals they have with the KRG, the central government in Baghdad would consider such dealings illegal and the companies would be blacklisted. In a related story, Tabloid Aksam reports the Iraqi Electricity Ministry blamed Turkey for suspending Iraq's electrical supply, which the Ministry said caused a halt in oil flow to Turkey.

TV Highlights  
NTV, 7.00 A.M.

#### Domestic News

- Police detained two suspects in connection with the January 3 car bomb attack in the mainly Kurdish southeastern city in Diyarbakir.
- Three students were injured in fighting between the left-wing and right-wing groups at Istanbul's Marmara University.
- Opposition CHP and DSP deputies applied to the Constitutional

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Court for the annulment of a new law concerning judges and prosecutors.

- Turkey's Oyak Bank was sold to the Netherlands-based ING Group and will be renamed ING Bank of Turkey.

#### International News

- The Bulgarian Parliament has rejected a nationalist proposal for the recognition of Armenian genocide claims.
- US Defense Secretary Robert Gates said NATO forces in southern Afghanistan were ill-prepared to fight an insurgency.
- Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has described the war in Iraq as 'the biggest mistake in US foreign policy.'
- President Gul will travel to Syria to attend the opening ceremony of 'Damascus, Capital of Arab Culture 2008' celebrations as the guest of President Bashar al-Assad.

WILSON